



## **The Avenue Project Task Force**

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

6:00pm-8:15pm

St. Marks Church

1725 Dorchester Avenue

### **Meeting Notes**

#### **Attendance:**

**Task Force Members:** Marisa Coleman, Edward Crowley, Sean Dennison, Eileen Fenton, Rosanne Foley, Jane Howard, Michael Mackan, Kimberlee Smith, Anita Marshall, Richard O'Mara, Arlene Lopes, Anne Riley, Leslie MacWeeney, Anne Hien Bui (Viet-Aid Rep)

Inés Soto-BRA, Jeremy Rosenberger-BRA, Eswaran Selvarajah-BRA, Ralph DeNisco-BTD, Vineet Gupta-BTD, Mary Knasas-DND, Elizabeth Leary-ISD, Evelyn Darling-FCMS, Dan Lerner-SMAMS, Molly Dunford-ONS, Trang Tran Le-Rep. Martin Walsh's Office, Renie Smith-Councilor Feeney's Office

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

- Meeting was called to order by the Dorchester Avenue Project Manager Inés Soto.
- Inés went through the agenda for the meeting.
- Inés introduced the two new youth members to the Task Force: Anita Marshall and Kimberlee Smith.
- In addition, Inés mentioned to the group that the Mayor will be coming to the next Working Group meeting on March 15. She said the group will update him on our work and introduce the youth representatives. This is the first appointed task force with youth representation.

#### **II. Update from Fields Corner Main Streets (FCMS)**

- Evelyn Darling, Program Manager for FCMS, updated the Task Force regarding FCMS. Evelyn mentioned she was hired in September and prior to coming to FCMS, she worked at St. Marks Main Streets. Evelyn highlighted that Arlene heads the design committee for FCMS. FCMS hopes to work with Kit Clark in the future toward updating their facade. Evelyn explained that the geographic boundaries of FCMS are from the Freeport/Dot Ave intersection to Melville/Dot Ave.
- Currently, FCMS has been trying to work with business and property owners in the district, but it has been difficult so far. Evelyn did highlight that they funds to contribute to storeowners that would like to business assistance.
- Evelyn discussed some upcoming events that FCMS would be involved

with the upcoming Boston Shines in April.

- Evelyn also highlighted an upcoming walking tour, part of the Walk Boston campaign that will tour Fields Corner on Saturday, February 25th, at 1pm. The event will start at the Fields Corner T Station and last about an hour.
- Evelyn mentioned FCMS has a new database that they are in the process of getting up and running and believe it will be a great tool for the program.
- In addition, FCMS is involved with the ongoing events at the Fields Corner Mall and would like to in the future look at redevelopment of the mall.
- Finally, Evelyn said they will initiate a customer survey for Fields Corner to gauge the economic environment of the district.

### **III. Fields Corner Mall Update**

- Andre Porter took the opportunity to explain to the Task Force what the city has been doing regarding the Fields Corner Mall. The group and Andre briefly talked about the events that have led up to the current state, and said the city's next step would be to start working on a date for a small group meeting with the business owner. Andre envisioned the group being composed of a Task Force member, FCMS, and real stakeholders. Andre did highlight the concern he has for managing the community's expectations for the mall.
- Richard O'Mara asked who the property owner was (Cifrino's). Andre replied that the property is under a trust company, with upwards of **24** limited partners. To sell the property would require a large vote between the partners.
- Andre mentioned that after careful deliberations, the city had reached a point where they can have a small discussion with the family.
- Ed asked what the current situation was regarding the mall. Andre summed up the situation by saying it will be a courtroom battle for a while until contracts are resolved. Andre said there is a lot of money at stake, making it a considerable legal battle.
- Ed also asked when did the grocery store recently open. Andre replied that ISD had OK'd the opening the prior week and the tenants were scrambling to open immediately.
- Inés put out to the group, one member of the group will have to represent the Task Force in the coming months and they should start to think about who that person should be.

### **II. Update from St. Marks Main Streets (SMAMS)**

- Dan Lerner, executive director for SMAMS, was on-hand to give an update to the Task Force. Dan mentioned that he's been thrilled to working with FCMS and the successful "Dotini" night was the first joint fundraiser. Dan highlight the next fundraiser is Saturday, February 25, at the Beachcomber in Quincy.
- Dan mentioned some of the fundraising has gone to the Banton Street project, which is completely leased. He said a coffee shop, which the

community supported and wanted, is hoping to open by the end of February.

- Dan also mentioned that SMAMS has been working on updating their database and are concentrating on building property owner relations
- Dan talked about the SMAMS design committee's current undertakings. The committee is initiating an anti-litter campaign funded by a grant from the Parks Department. The committee is also overseeing the Dot Art Collaborative and RFP's for public art displays in Peabody Square went out and will be selected by the end of April.
- Dan also discussed the upcoming Peabody Square improvements. Peabody Square will be the focus of most initiatives for St. Marks due to its businesses being the most active. Dan also mentioned a crime watch/public safety coalition with businesses is in the works. They have support from public officials and police, and are now putting together a working group. The infrastructure improvements in Peabody Square are based on a past planning project with the community. City staff has begun to put the process into gear and the first public meeting regarding the improvements will be Thursday, March 16th.
- Ralph DeNisco from BTM envisioned this step as the first of three in the design process. Ralph hopes to have developed 100% submittal plans developed by the consultants and community by the end of the year.
- Anne asked about the boundaries for Peabody Square, and Dan replied that is Mercier Avenue to Melville Avenue Parkman Street. Anne also inquired is the Peabody Square funds were coming from the Task Force funds, and Ines told the group the funding is allocated separately by the city.

#### **IV. Presentation on the Business Trend Analysis**

- Eswaran and Mary presented to the Task Force a draft of the Business Trend Analysis to the group.
- Dan Larner replied that the Trend Analysis will provide statistics to give to potential businesses to encourage the location in certain areas.
- Jane Howard brought up the point that the population on Dot Ave makes up half of the Dorchester neighborhood. Jane also pointed out the Trend Analysis shows that auto usage, which was once prominent along the Ave, is now declining.
- Evelyn asked if the data collection is for the entire avenue. Eswaran responded that they are looking more closely at the trade areas of Dorchester Avenue.

#### **V. Discussion with ISD on the Signage & Permitting Workshops**

- Jeremy passed out a draft of the PowerPoint presentation that we will be a component of the upcoming Signage and Permitting Workshops and spoke briefly about the upcoming workshops.
- Elizabeth Leary gave an overview of her experience with similar

workshops in the neighborhoods of Boston, and fielded some questions regarding ISD issues along the Ave.

- A question was brought up about the legality of solid grating, and that there have been some instances on the Ave of these popping up. Elizabeth mentioned that new instances of solid grating usage are illegal and she will look into the matters on the Ave.

#### **VI. Update on the Urban Design & Transportation Action Plan RFP**

- Vineet and Ralph provided an update to the group about the upcoming RFP.
- Inés mentioned that the RFP was being reviewed by the front offices of the BRA and will be ready for consultants on March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Vineet gave an overview of the current draft of the RFP and fielded questions from the group.
- Leslie was concerned that the consultants might produce results that would not be complementary to the Ave, but Ines and Ralph assured the Task Force that they will be dictating to the consultants their wants and needs.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at around **8:15** p.m.